Efforts to get Indians released from Pak jails

†1698. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the efforts made by Government to ascertain the status of 930 civilians, 407 fishermen, 54 PoWs and 2 Indians detained in Pakistani jails alongwith the levels at which these efforts were made;

(b) whether Government are also taking the help of International Red Cross Society in the matter;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) since when the said 54 PoWs and other persons are languishing in Pakistani jails; and

(e) what is the condition of their health?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Government, through diplomatic channels, have been consistently taking up the issue of early release and repatriation of the Indian prisoners under Pakistan's custody. The matter was also taken up during the Foreign Secretary level talks on June 27-28, 2004 in New Delhi, and again during the Secretary (Culture) level talks on promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields, held in New Delhi on August, 3-4, 2004.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The Shimla Agreement has committed both Indian and Pakistan to address all issues bilaterally.

(d) and (e) Pakistan has never acknowledged the presence of Indian PoWs that are believed to be in Pakistan's custody since 1972. From time to time, the returning Indian prisoners have informed that the Indians in Pakistani jails are living under difficult conditions and some have even lost their mental balance.

Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails

†SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of political prisoners, general prisoners and fishermen

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.